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SOME LIVING ENGLISH PAINTERS.

FREDERICK WEDMORE delivered some time ago a lecture on "Living English Painters," in which, having mentioned the various branches of art wherein, at given periods, England had most excelled—the art of portraiture a century ago, and landscape painting forty years since—he observed that the severer technical training lately within reach of English artists had already resulted in an improved treatment of figure subjects both in oil and in water-color. Certain men, it was true, who were neither young nor old, were learned draughtsmen of the figure; among them were Sir Frederick Leighton and G. F. Watts; but generally the most accomplished figure drawing was to be found among some of the younger men.

Mr. Millais was a master of pure force in painting—a realist who had begun by being imaginative. He had had his poetical period—the period of the "Huguenot"—but of late he had been the painter of fact and not of feeling. He saw with the keenest eye and recorded with the surest hand. In pure force, and the audacious use of it, he was alone in the English school. But he was a painter of what he saw, and no imagination had transformed his vision. Mr. Watts was a learned master of austere design, who omitted, perhaps too often, the charm of color. But if he was the painter of many an allegory, difficult to love, if easy to admire, he was also the painter of such pictures as the exquisite little "Dorothy." Sir Frederick Leighton, painting episodes of romance or fable, was valued, it might be, chiefly for the pleasantness of his composition and the grace and elegance of his work. It had no evil tendency but that of being sometimes super-refined, and it presented often such a union of force and agreeableness that all the world had come to enjoy it, and had fully ratified the Academicians' choice of Sir Frederick as President of the chief society of artists.

But in an age when there was rising a peculiar craving for an unfamiliar order of beauty it was natural that some artists should be found to supply it, and the aim of Mr. Burne-Jones and Albert Moore was alike elevated—Mr. Burne-Jones' in portrayal of the troubled soul, and Mr. Moore's in his representation of the untroubled body. Amid the strange inequalities of Mr. Burne-Jones the rare virtues of his art were to be recognized—his occasional nobility of color, his tenderness of sentiment, his faultless drawing of the flower and the leaf. His work, at its best, presented not what was round us every day, but the record of some hope or joy that was far below the surface of things, as Mr. Moore's work gave us the vision of joyful light and hue—some happiness brought us by the neighborhood of chosen forms. The beauty that Mr. Moore sought and found was so pure and healthy that it was morality too. England had never possessed an artist quite so sensitive to the pure beauty of form in movement, and of delicate tints that were hardly to be confused with full color.

If Mr. Moore was in some sense an idealist, Mr. Legros was a realist. He excelled in the veracious portrayal of pathetic incidents of homely life, of which perhaps the greatest was the "Repast of the Poor." Mr. Legros understood force better than beauty. His was the ugly side of reality, which was generally called realism. Mr. Pettie was a painter of incident, no less observant than Mr. Legros—though less pathetic, and with a gift of noble color rare in a Scotchman. The study of exceptional or of every-day character, and of fine types—the appreciation of the experience of age, the delicate handling of the lines and hues of youth—these things were all Mr. Pettie's.

Reference was subsequently made to one of the latest and most brilliant phases of English art—that of popular book illustration—Mr. Caldecott and Mr. Walter Crane being particularly mentioned. Mr. Wedmore said that Mr. Caldecott was modern in expression, despite the eighteenth-century costumes and accessories of his designs, and his landscape backgrounds made him modern, because, instead of being generalized, they were carefully selected. His expression was always intense, and if the imagination of the artist was in the quiet England of his grandfathers, he was himself of our day.

Mr. Crane was also individual, though he had derived something from the Florentines and more from Stothard. His draughtsmanship of the figure was often incomplete and unequal, but it would be doing scanty justice to the charm of his work, its naïveté, its grace and its inventiveness, if one were to say that not until Mr.

Crane reached faultless draughtsmanship could that work take high and permanent place.

RUSKIN SHARPLY CRITICISED.

RUSKIN—the learned, the rugged, the eccentric—has been handled without gloves by Professor John Marshall, of the Yorkshire College of Science, in a recent address before the Nottingham Art Society. Mr. Ruskin, the lecturer said, was constantly being referred to as a great art critic, and they might fairly expect from a teacher on any practical subject, first that his doctrine be a reasonable and reasonably consistent one, and second that it would work in practice. He doubted whether Mr. Ruskin's writings satisfied either of these requirements. "One found at the present time many intelligent people who thought that upon this subject of art Mr. Ruskin was a sort of inspired being, whom they must not question. This was due to the ignorance of the general public about pictures and how they were made. Very little of what he said was either true or new." Professor Marshall told his hearers to dispossess themselves of the notion that Mr. Ruskin was two men. He was the same, he said, in his treatment of political and economic questions as in his dealings with art; his great failing was to run away with some abstract in entire disregard of the actual facts of life. "Nothing was more delightful than to read Mr. Ruskin, if only you desired to let plain common-sense have a holiday." It was a doubtful question whether Turner's reputation had gained or lost by Mr. Ruskin's extravagant praise. In the course of a severely analytical criticism of Mr. Ruskin's position as an art critic, Professor Marshall condemned "the egoism which led him to speak with all the infallibility of a pope, and to demand obedience even where the reason was not able to follow his chain of argument."

BORROWED ARCHITECTURE.

In a lecture on "Architecture," recently delivered at Edinburgh, Mr. H. H. Statham noted how the Romans, while they admired Greek architecture, adopted it in a way which indicated a perfect misconception of it. "For instance, they would construct buildings with columns placed at such a distance that no stones could carry from one to the other; but they would imitate, all the same, the Greek architrave and cornice, and put an arch underneath to carry them. Then, when they wanted columns to support an arch, they could not be content to spring the arch from the capital of the column; they had always been accustomed to think of a column as it was in the Greek architecture—something with an architrave, frieze, and cornice; and therefore they placed over the capital a slice of the architrave, a slice of the frieze, and a slice of the cornice, without any reason whatever." Laying down the principle that the grouping of a building should arise out of its plan, the lecturer said that an edifice with two wings, differing internally, but showing the same external features, was an architectural falsity. And yet, he observed, this falsity was committed over and over again, wherever an architect treated the outside of a building without reference to the interior, instead of making the outside express the nature and internal grouping of the structure. Looking back upon the past course of architecture, we should see, he said, that all we now admired was built by people who built it with practical ends in view, not excluding art, and it was not likely we should get architecture which future generations would admire, or which would express the wants of our generation, until we did the same.

The Print Collector.

THE FATHER OF ENGRAVING IN ENGLAND.

THE story of John Boydell—his rise from small beginnings, his great successes, the good he did for art, the civic honors he won, and finally his deplorable bankruptcy—forms a notable chapter in the history of engraving. Boydell was born in 1719, and having served six years' apprenticeship to a London engraver named Thoms, he commenced working for himself at

the age of twenty-four. His first publication was a set of small landscapes, drawn and engraved by himself. These he sold at the modest price of one shilling. His next venture was on a much more ambitious scale; after engraving a large number of plates, he published them together at five guineas the set. This work met with such success that it laid the foundation of his great fortune. In writing of it himself he says: "It was by the profit of these prints that the engraver of them was enabled to hold out encouragement to artists in this line"; and he adds, with pardonable pride: "It was the first book that ever made a Lord Mayor of London."

At this time the art of engraving was in a very backward condition in England. Then, as now, the British collectors were liberal and intelligent; but they drew their supplies entirely from the Continent, where Edelinck, Wille, and the Bolswerts had produced their splendid engravings. Boydell saw this, and resolved to "protect home industry," by producing at least as good engravings at home as the collectors could find abroad. This he could not have done with his own hands, for he was never an engraver of great ability; but he possessed that valuable gift, the power to recognize and to utilize the talent of others—a gift through which so many men have achieved success. Thus he found and employed a young engraver named William Woollett, who was some fifteen years his junior. Woollett was a great artist, probably the greatest landscape engraver of any age or country. At the same time he was a man of an exceedingly modest and retiring disposition, and it was through the enlightened liberality and executive ability of Boydell that he was enabled to practise his art in quietness, at a time when every engraver was his own publisher. Woollett's first work for Boydell was that magnificent plate after Claude, "The Temple of Apollo." He was twenty-five years old at the time. Next came a pair of landscapes after British artists—the brothers Smith, of Chichester—this pair is the well-known "First and Second Premium Print." After these came the "Phaeton," and the "Niobe" after Richard Wilson. All these superb prints were published by Boydell at the very low price of five shillings each. About a century later a proof of the "Niobe" was sold by auction in the Johnson collection for seventy pounds sterling—an advance of twenty-seven thousand nine hundred per cent!

As Boydell prospered he employed other young and talented engravers. Three of the very finest masterpieces ever engraved were due to his enterprise. These were Sharp's print of the "Doctors of the Church," after Guido, and Earlom's pair of mezzotints—the "Fruit Piece" and the "Flower Piece." What Woollett was in landscape engraving Earlom was in mezzotint: his works are the acknowledged masterpieces in that style. The production of so many high-class prints in England not only put a stop to the large importations from the Continent, but actually turned the tide, so that numbers of these fine works were exported.

In 1776 Boydell had the honor of being elected alderman of his ward—he did not live in New York. Later he served as High Sheriff, and in 1790 he became Lord Mayor of London, in which high office he served for two terms.

The greatest enterprise of his life was the production of the "Shakespeare Gallery." Every connoisseur of fine books is familiar with Boydell's Shakespeare. It was about 1785 that this immense undertaking was begun. It was entirely the work of British artists. There were one hundred paintings produced, all of life-size, and the work of thirty-two painters and two sculptors. Boydell built a splendid gallery for the exhibition of these pictures, and it was his intention to bequeath the whole to the nation at his death. Thirty-three engravers were employed in the reproduction of the designs; but notwithstanding the energy and liberality of the projector it took twenty years to complete the work. But his princely generosity carried him beyond his depth, and the Napoleonic wars having paralyzed trade, Boydell found himself, at the age of eighty-six, a bankrupt for a great sum. This disaster, however, did not impair the high respect in which he was held. King George the Fourth (then Prince Regent) proposed his health at a public banquet, and Parliament gave him permission to dispose of the paintings by lottery. John Boydell died a few months later, and his remains were honored with a public funeral, attended by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London.